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**THE USE OF POP CULTURE REFERENCES TO MOTIVATE STUDENTS DURING  
FORM 3 ENGLISH LESSONS IN TAMPARULI**

**ELEAZAR EHUD JAMES**



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**UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS  
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**CAPSTONE ACTION RESEARCH SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR IN EDUCATION  
(TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE)**

**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION  
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## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that this Capstone Action Research Project Report is my own original work except for the quotations and summaries which I have duly acknowledged.

**Signature:**



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## ABSTRACT

Learning English in schools has always involved using relatable topics for the students being taught. However, textbooks and workbooks that are based on the textbooks in Malaysia are not revised yearly, making the content outdated as the year accumulates. Pop-culture, on the other hand, keeps the lesson interesting and fresh as a motivator for students to learn the English language in classrooms. In this research, there were 30 participants that were aged 15 and are Form 3 students. This study observes a lesson delivery conducted with a text-book based topic and a pop-culture related topic. After that, a task was given that allowed two groups of participants to work on general topics and pop-culture topics respectively. The observation and document analysis from the given task provides a perspective on how the right topic selection can motivate the participants to be active during the lesson delivery as well as completing a classroom task beyond the expected responses predicted by the teacher. Pop-culture has always been around in human society but it has only seen proper utilisation in education in recent years. This study decides to add to the literature surrounding pop-culture and its effects to the teaching and learning environment especially in English classrooms.





## ABSTRAK

Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris di sekolah selalu melibatkan penggunaan topik yang berhubung kait dengan minat pelajar apabila diajar. Walau bagaimanapun, buku teks dan buku latih tubi yang juga berasaskan buku teks di Malaysia tidak disemak semula setiap tahun dan hal ini membuat kandungan dalam buku teks semakin ketinggalan zaman sehingga kepada hari ini. Sebaliknya, budaya popular atau “*pop-culture*”, mampu membuatkan pembelajaran menarik dan baharu sebagai sebuah pendorong bagi pelajar untuk belajar Bahasa Inggeris di dalam bilik darjah. Dalam kajian ini, terdapat 30 peserta kajian yang berumur 15 tahun dan berada pada tahap sekolah Tingkatan 3. Penelitian ini memerhati sebuah sesi pengajaran dan pembelajaran yang dijalankan menggunakan topik umum daripada buku teks dan juga topik berkaitan dengan budaya popular. Selepas itu, sebuah tugas bertopik umum daripada buku teks dan bertopik budaya popular juga diberi kepada dua kumpulan peserta kajian untuk dibuat secara masing-masing. Pemerhatian dan analisis dokumen daripada tugas yang diberi mendedahkan sebuah perspektif tentang bagaimana pemilihan topik yang bagus boleh memberi dorongan kepada peserta kajian untuk menjadi aktif semasa proses pengajaran dan juga semasa menyiapkan tugas bilik darjah dengan jawapan yang diluar jangkaan guru. Budaya popular memang telah wujud dalam masyarakat kita tapi budaya tersebut baru sahaja digunakan dalam pendidikan kebelakangan ini. Penelitian ini memutuskan untuk menambah kepada literatur mengenai budaya popular dan kesannya kepada pengajaran dan pembelajaran, terutamanya dalam kelas Bahasa Inggeris.



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION



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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

This section will mainly provide the background of this research and highlight the main objectives that this research aims to achieve. This chapter will start with the background of the research, followed by the statement of the problem, the purpose of the research, the research objectives and research questions, the significance of the research, and the definition of terms present in this paper.

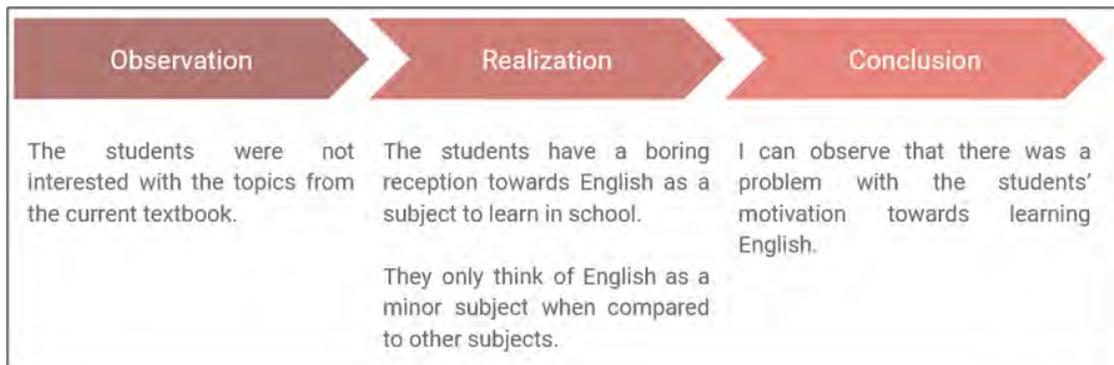
### 1.1 Background of the Study

Student motivation plays an important role in the process of learning as motivation inspires the students to learn more passionately. This in turn will increase the effectiveness of learning that is done by the students. Conversely, topic selection plays a role in increasing students' motivation when learning because a good topic would make the students interested in the lesson while the opposite will occur if an uninteresting topic were to be chosen. This means that the topic of the lesson delivery plays a vital role in motivating students and teachers have to be responsible in choosing the topic that is not only interesting for the students but also present it in a way that is appealing for them.

Thus, this study will closely follow on how pop culture references can be a motivating factor to learn in the English classroom. This study will utilise action research as the research design of this study and a qualitative approach will be used for the collection and analysis of data from this study.



## 1.2 Problem Statement



**Figure 1: Identification Process of the Research Problem**

The research problem stemmed from a personal experience of teaching during my stint as a practicum teacher. Based on personal observation as a practicum teacher, it was found that the students were not really interested with the topic from the current textbook as well as the workbook (which is also based on the textbook). This has caused some of the students to have a boring reception towards English as a subject to learn in school. The students would not be motivated and were more likely to not give their attention during the lesson delivery as they find ways to entertain themselves or simply doze off. This in turn also causes disruption in the lesson delivery as the students are not willing to participate in the lesson and are instead finding ways to combat boredom. Indirectly, this also inculcates the thought of English as a minor subject when compared to other subjects such as mathematics, science, and history.

Thus, it was found that there was a problem with the students' motivation towards learning English in school and this problem has been decided to be the basis of this study.

## 1.3 Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to mainly observe the effects of integrating pop-culture references when teaching to grab the attention of the students' during the



teaching and learning process. In addition, this research will also observe the students' work when pop-culture is integrated into the given task. After that, the data collected will be analysed using thematic and discourse analysis to obtain a perspective on how pop-culture can be utilised to motivate students in the English classroom.

Thus, this research will solely focus on pop-culture references and its effects when employed in teaching and learning context towards form 3 students in the classroom.

#### 1.4 Research Objectives

The proposed research objectives that I have set for this study are as follows:

1. **To investigate the effects of pop-culture references towards students' motivation during the lesson delivery.**
2. **To find out the impact of pop-culture references towards students' tasks.**



#### 1.5 Research Questions

Derived from the research objectives, these are the research questions for this study:

1. **How does pop-culture references affect the students' motivation during the lesson delivery?**
2. **What impact did pop-culture references bring to the students' tasks?**

#### 1.6 Significance of the Study

The motivation to learn has always played a vital role in the teaching and learning process that students undergo in school and outside of school. Wigfield, Faust, Cambria, & Eccles (2019) stated that the motivation of students can come from





various sources which are the tasks and classroom practices, the teacher–student relationships, peers, learning in groups, and school transitions. However, to reduce the scope of this research, this paper will only focus on the tasks and classroom practices and how relevant topic selection can affect the learning motivation of students in the classroom. Thus, the research of this paper will provide insight on the relevance of pop-culture related topic selection and its impact towards student motivation during the lesson delivery.

### 1.7 Definition of Terms

In this study, there will be a few terms/jargons that will be extensively used throughout this paper. This section will explain these terms.

#### Topic Selection

Teaching in an English classroom requires a teacher to choose a topic derived from four broad themes from the Standards-Based English Language Curriculum (SBELC) which are “People and Culture”, “Health and Environment”, “Science and Technology”, and “Consumerism and Financial Awareness”. Topic selection can refer directly to the selection of topics that are readily available in English Textbooks such as “Extreme Situations”, “Money”, “Family Ties”, and “Time to Spare”. On the other hand, teachers can also derive their own topics to cater the needs of the classroom.

#### Pop-Culture

Pop-culture or popular culture refers to traditions or aspects of culture that are prevalent in today’s society. Kidd (2021) defines pop-culture as practices, beliefs, and objects that generally share the same meaning throughout a social system. This includes popular sources of media such as movies, songs, TV series, games, and the Internet. Pop-culture has always been prevalent in all types of media such as





newspapers, radios, television, the Internet, and more recently through social media. It has actively made its way to the society as a culture that is relatable to various demographics especially young adults and teenagers to the extent that some pop-culture celebrities are “worshipped” such as K-Pop affiliated supporters, e-sports and sport icons, animated cartoon characters, and Virtual Youtubers that are on the rise as of late.

